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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: GOJ CONDEMNS UN HEADQUARTERS BOMBING; PRESS,
STREET REACTION SOFTER

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

GOJ REACTION

1. (U) The GOJ reacted strongly against the August 19 bombing of U.N. HQ in Baghdad. Information Minister, Nabil al-Sharif, released a statement condemning the "criminal and cowardly act" and expressing hope that it would not delay achieving the goals of security and stability in Iraq. The statement added that the U.N. "will remain an umbrella for international legitimacy and neutrality". The Foreign Minister sent U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan a condolence letter referring to the "brutal and cowardly terrorist attack" and unequivocally condemning such acts against the U.N. and its staff.

PRESS REACTION

2. (U) Jordanian dailies analyzed the attack, asking rhetorically who might have carried it out and the impact it will have on U.S. forces in Iraq. An editorial in the pro-government daily Al-Rai labeled the attack as "blind terrorism" and questioned the motives of the perpetrators by asking if it was not the UN which refused to legitimize the presence of U.S. and British forces in Iraq. Columnist Mohammad Amayreh, also in Al-Rai, while labeling the resistance as "brave", distinguishes between "legitimate resistance" and "condemnable terrorism". He said the bombing of the Jordanian Embassy and the strikes against water and oil pipelines are not harming the "occupation forces" but the Iraqis themselves and called those behind such attacks saboteurs rather than men of the resistance.

3. (U) More cynically, Nahed Hattar, a columnist for the independent Al-Arab Al-Yawm, said the UN headquarters bombing was evidence that U.S. forces cannot maintain any level of public security and suggested that the situation may be spiraling into "utter chaos". He surmised that the resistance may have targeted the U.N. because of perceptions that it is "functioning as a tool in the hands of the Americans". Hattar feared that the strike, in the end, may prove beneficial to the U.S. and "might help unite the Security Council members behind it". He thinks the resistance is "wearing down the U.S. forces" and calls for their withdrawal.

COMMENT

4. (C) Outside of official media, the reaction of Jordanians in the street to the bombing has been surprisingly light. A comment heard from several of our contacts is that, after 13 years of UN-imposed sanctions, many Iraqis may not see the UN as a neutral body or the repository of international legitimacy. Others have told us that this outrage, following that on Jordan's embassy, has stripped the attackers in Iraq of any perceived credibility or legitimacy they might have held in Jordan as "freedom fighters".
HALE